

# Easy How Cults Recruit on Campus Targets

By M. Sullivan

If someone came up to you while you were reading this and asked you to fork over your bank account, give up your education, spend 18 hours a day with the same people and not have any more contact with your parents or friends, what would you do? Probably laugh in the person's face and walk away. But what if his tactics were different? What if he asked you about school sports, campus issues, your friends and family? You might be more inclined to give out your phone number.

When you arrive on campus you're vulnerable: away from home, in a new city, eager to break away from your old life and try something new. Cult recruiters, trained to be disarming and friendly, latch onto students and bring them into a new circle of friends. Slowly the commitment increases, and your schoolwork starts to slip. On-campus friends disappear, and family contact is limited. Before you know it, you're sucked in.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of college students have been recruited into cults. Exact figures are hard to come by, but there are about 3,000 cults operating in the U.S. Universities are responding to this threat in several ways. Some schools, such as UCLA, produce warning pamphlets with information about avoiding and responding to cult pressures. Boston University has a support group for victims. Several schools have banned certain organizations from soliciting students. One group, the

Videotape frame of Herff Applewhite, leader of the Heaven's Gate cult, whose 39 members committed suicide in 1997.

AP Photo/WTOL-TV and KCBS-TV

## DOES YOUR GROUP:

Solicit complete dedication to one philosophy or leader?

Hide its identity or ultimate goal from new members?

Use guilt or fear tactics to maintain loyalty?

Force members into marathon service hours, exhausting them and lessening their critical thinking skills?

Encourage alienation from family, friends, or other groups?

## Weirdest College Nicknames and Mascots

School	Nickname	School	Nickname
Arkansas Tech	Wonder Boys	Wayne State University (MI)	Tartars
Southern Arkansas	Muleriders	St. Louis University	Billikens
UC-Irvine	Anteaters	Webster University (MO)	Gorlocks
UC-Santa Cruz	Banana Slugs	Campbell University (NC)	Fighting Camels
Whittier College (CA)	Poets	Wake Forest (NC)	Demon Deacons
Oglethorpe (GA)	Stormy Petrels	Muskingum College (OH)	Fighting Muskies
University of Idaho	Vandals	Franklin and Marshall (PA)	Diplomats
Trinity Christian College (IL)	Trolls	Gettysburg College (PA)	Bullets
Earlham College (IN)	Hustlin' Quakers	Columbia College (SC)	Koala Bears
Pittsburg State (KS)	Gorillas	South Dakota School of Mines and Technology	Hardrockers
Southwestern College (KS)	Moundbuilders	Evergreen State College (WA)	Geoducks
Washburn University (KS)	Ichabods		
Western Maryland	Green Terror		

Source: usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/find/comasct

International Churches of Christ, has been banned from at least 39 colleges, including Harvard.

The ICC is a fast growing Christian evangelical group found across the U.S. The organization was founded in Boston. A sub-group within the ICC, called the Upside Down Club, is a youth-run organization and can be found on many campuses. New recruits are brought to meetings and outings before they realize that it is not a school-sanctioned organization. By that time, they have made connections with group members, and it's difficult to leave. The emotional strain can be intense, especially if the recruit feels as though there's nowhere else to turn.

Religious cults, although most commonly discussed in the media, are not the only high-pressure groups found on campus. Political, business, and social organizations can also meet the criteria for a cult. These organizations can also require total devotion, but instead of a religious agenda, they preach revolution, wealth or superiority. All these groups use the same tactics to recruit and retain members. •

For a guide to online support groups and emergency information go to [steamtunnels.net](http://steamtunnels.net) and search for keyword "Support."

## LINKS

### Campusnewsincults.com

Read about cults in the news, with FAQs on how to avoid and identify high-pressure groups.

### FACTnet.org

A nonprofit news source and archive dedicated to the "freedom of mind." Good source of links, lots of information on Scientology.

### Ocl.berkeley.edu/%7Eroville/cultsoncampus

Comprehensive list of links to articles on cults. Based in California, but the information applies to schools and cults across the county.

### Members.tripod.com/nfishol/index.html

This evocative site was created by parents who have lost their children to the Jim Roberts Group, whose members wander the U.S. and eat out of garbage cans—hence their nickname "The Garbage Eaters."